Delegation of Powers to states under forest (Conservation) Act, 1980

202. SHRI AHMED MOHAMED BHAI PATEL: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that some State Governments have been representing to the Central Government to delegate them the powers under Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980;

(b) if so, what decision has been taken on these representations;

(c) whether Sarkaria Commisson had also made some recommendations in this respect;

(d) whether State Government of Gujarat has also urged the Central Government to delegate the powers under Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 to avoid porocedural delays; and

(e) if so, whether any final decision in this regard has been taken?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) After discussing the issue in various fora including the State Forest Minister's Conference held during February, 1992, it was decided to further decentralise and streamline examination of proposals under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. Accordingly, Forest (Conservation) Rules, 1981 have been suitably amended on 21.5.1992 and revised consolidated guidelines for examination of proposals under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 have been issued on 25.10.1992. Revised consolidated guidelines *inter alia* include delegation of powers to Regional Chief Conservator of Forests to finally decide proposals involving diversion of forest land upto 5 ha. excluding proposals in respect of regularisation of encroachments and mining and initial examination of all proposals involving diversion of forest land upto 20 ha.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) Yes, Sir.

(e) No, Sir.

Effect of pollution on school going children in Delhi

203. SHRI VIREN J. SHAH:
SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to a report published in the Economic Times of 4th February, 1994 under the caption, 'Pollution driving Delhi's kids to inhalers';

(b) whether it is a fact that school going children in Delhi are vulnerable victims of pollution and most of them are suffering from bronchial asthma and other respiratory problems;

(c) if the answers to parts (a) and (b) above be in the affirmative, what are the details in this regard; and

(d) what steps Gvoernment have taken to check the air and water pollution in the country and particularly in Delhi?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Children who travel to school by roads with heavy vehicular traffic are vulnerable to pollution. There are no statistical data available with the Government to say that most of the children are suffering from bronchial asthma and other respiratory problems.

(d) The steps taken to check the air and water pollution in the country and particularly in Delhi include the following;

(i) Standards for discharge of effluents and emissions from major categories of polluting industries have been notified under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

(ii) The major air and water polluting industries in Delhi have been identified.

(iii) Industries are to comply with the standards laid by installation of pollution control equipment within a stipulated time-frame and legal action is taken against the defaulting units.

(iv) A network of water quality monitoring stations have been set up to monitor the water quality of the River Yamuna at various points of effluent discharge and ambient air quality monitoring stations in areas with high industrial and traffic density.

(v) A number of schemes for construction/augmentation of sewerage and sewage treatment plants for treatment of domestic wastes are under implementation.

(vi) Combined Effluent Treatment Plan (CETPs) for treating effluents from clusters of water polluting industries has been taken up.

(vii) All the three thermal power plants in Delhi have installed electrostatic precipitators, for control of emissions.

(viii) For control of vehicular pollution, gross and mass emission standards have been notified under the Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989.

(ix) The Delhi Administration is implementing a comprehensive action plan to reduce pollution and control smoke emission from its buses. This action plan consists of:

(1) Reducing smoke emission by tuning vehicle engines. Of the 3627 vehicles checked, 3624 vehicles have already been cleared/rectified to adhere to the prescribed norms.

(2) Acquiring new buses for replacement of over-aged buses from the active fleet. 500 such buses have already been phased out.

(3) Reducing over-loading.

(4) Equipping the test units with smoke meters for monitoring the smoke levels of the fleet held at the units. Vehicles are being checked at a periodicity of six months.

(c) Prosecution are launched against defaulters. From April 1992 to June 1993, a total of 8988 buses operating under State Transport Authority were checked and owners of 3046 buses were prosecuted.

Forest cover in Kerala

204. SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) what is the minimum forest cover required as per the norms laid down by the Government of India;

(b) what was the percentage of forest cover at the time of formation of the Kerala State; and

(c) what is the percentage of forest cover in Kerala at present?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) The National Forest Policy, 1988 advocates that a minimum of one third of the total land area of the country should be under forest or tree cover.

(b) The percentage of actual forest cover of Kerala at the time of formation of the State is not available as assessment of forest cover by visual interpretation of satellite imagery in the country was initiated since the eighties. However, as per information available the percentage of all types of forests in the State including private forests (by legal status) was 29.1% at the time of formation of the state. The percentage of forest area under the Forest Department during the period was 23.3%.

(c) The percentage of actual forest cover in Kerala at present is 26.5% (as